



The Quran for All Humanity

MAULANA WAHIDUDDIN KHAN

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Table of Contents.....	2
A Human Failing.....	5
Universe bears Witness.....	7
Wise Men	9
In the Hereafter.....	11
Man's Trial	14
Robe of Piety	16
The Coming Times	18
Reformed Behaviour	21
God's Voice	23
The Blessings of God.....	25
God's Command	28
Day and Night	30
In the Light of Experience	32
Mental Frame.....	34

Table of Contents

Trial.....	36
Signs of the Universe	39
Human Will	41
Voluntary Submission	43
Embellishment of Actions	46
Nature's Covenant	48
Knowledge and Ignorance	50
An Admonition	52
Good Actions	54
The Reason for Differences.....	56
Divine Surveillance	58
The Goal of Life	60
Guidance by the Prophets	62
Just Balance	64
The Day of Defeat and Victory	66
Creation Plan	69



Table of Contents

Internal Witness.....	72
Two Paths.....	74
The System Established by God.....	76
The Bounty of Food.....	79
O Mankind!	81
O Man!.....	83
Period of Respite	85
The Test Paper	87
Two Heights.....	90
The Noblest of God's Creation.....	92
The Book of Guidance.....	95
An Earthquake.....	98
After Death.....	101
Weighty Actions	103
Material Pursuit.....	106
The Time is a Witness	108

A HUMAN FAILING

Men, serve your Lord, Who has created you and those who have gone before you, so that you may guard yourselves against evil; Who has made the earth a bed for you and the sky a dome, and has sent down water from the sky to bring forth fruits for your sustenance. Do not knowingly set up other gods beside Him.

(The Qur'an 2:21-22)

Man is a creature who cannot survive on his own. At all times he requires many a support to maintain his existence in this world: an earth whose gravity keeps him upon its surface; an atmosphere to provide him with a constant supply of oxygen; a sun, which unfailingly gives him heat and light; an abundance of water, without which no human life is possible; a variety of foods to give him continual nourishment. God, therefore, as the Creator of man, and of all the other things in the heavens and on earth, has made lavish provision of all these innumerable other things for man's existence in this world.

A Human Failing

Indeed, God has brought into existence the entire universe and everything is under His constant surveillance. That is why the only proper course for man is to accept God as his Creator, Sustainer and Lord, without associating anyone or any thing in His godhead. But since God is not visible, it sometimes happens that man comes to attach importance to something visible, and perhaps tangible and then accords to it the status of divinity. A creature, or a thing, comes, partly or wholly, to be regarded as the Creator's equal, and is sometimes even given the name of God.

This is where man falls into serious error. For the Prophet's call to man is to accord the status of greatness to God alone. Any thing or creature seated on the pedestal of divinity must therefore be unseated and divested of this status of greatness. It is only fitting, and in the true nature of things, that man should worship God alone, without associating any other object with Him.



UNIVERSE BEARS WITNESS

In the creation of the heavens and the earth; in the alternation of night and day; in the ships that sail the ocean with cargoes beneficial to man; in the water which God sends down from the sky and with which he revives the earth after its death, dispersing over it all manner of beasts; in the movements of the winds, and in the clouds driven between earth and sky: surely in these there are signs for people who understand.

(The Qur'an 2:163-164)

The universe, stretching out to infinity on all sides, is a sublime testament to God's immanence. The very existence of an incredibly vast universe is proof of there being a Creator. And that there is only one Creator and Sustainer is testified to by the complete harmony and correspondence of all the objects in existence, despite their multiplicity.

So many of these things having been tamed to meet human requirements shows that man's Creator is a God of unbounded compassion; even before man came into existence, God had already provided for

all his needs. Moreover, the usefulness inherent in so many of our earthly phenomena is a silent, but certain indicator of the universe having been consciously planned as a purposive entity. A sign of the limitless extent of God's power is the infinite variety of animal species all thriving on the same nutrients and water which He provided. Another sign of his power is the inevitability with which each death is succeeded by a life. Life and freshness come to lifeless things because that is how God causes nature to function. If death in the universe is only a temporary phase, that is because God wills it to be so.

Man's God is only One God. He alone is worthy of becoming the centre of man's attention. Our existence and all the things we have been provided with on earth are attributable solely to God, the source of all divine blessings. Man must make Him his object of worship in the real sense and must eternally associate with Him all his hopes and feelings.

WISE MEN

In the creation of the heavens and the earth, and in the alternation of night and day, there are signs for men of sense; those that remember God when standing, sitting, and lying down, and reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth (saying): 'Lord, You have not created these in vain. Glory be to You! Save us from the torment of the Fire. Lord, those whom You will cast into Hell shall be put to eternal shame: none will help the evil-doers.

(The Qur'an 3:190-192)

The Universe in its entire existence is a silent proclamation, but it is only when man unstops his ears that he starts to hear it. He finds it impossible that in a universe where the stars and planets survive for millions of years, man with all his desires and ambitions is obliterated from the face of the earth in a very short period of time. In a world where there is the beauty of the trees, the delicacy of the flowers, where air, water, sun and innumerable such meaningful things have been

Wise Men

provided, should there be no other fate for man but an endless chain of woe and agony?

Then he finds it impossible too that in a world of boundless opportunities, where tiny seeds sown in the earth have the potential to grow into a whole forest of lush green vegetation, man should reap no fruit after leading a life of piety and virtue. In a world where a bright day follows each dark night, centuries go by but justice does not make its appearance. And where earthquakes and tempests, reined in by nature, slumber in the lap of the earth, man continues to oppress people without anything ever staying his hands.

Those who go deeply into the matter find it inconceivable that a meaningful universe should culminate in a meaningless end. Therefore they believe in the Caller of Truth with the conviction that his message, in the language of words, is a silent endorsement of the same truth as is being broadcast every moment in the entire universe.

IN THE HEREAFTER

'Jinn and men! Did there not come to you apostles of your own who proclaimed to you My revelations and warned you of this day?' They will reply: 'We bear witness against our own souls.' Indeed, the life of this world beguiled them. They will testify to their own faithlessness. Your Lord will not destroy a nation without just cause and due warning.

(The Qur'an 6:131-132)

By drawing man towards him through attractive temptations, Satan actually wants to prove the truth of the challenge which he gave to God at the beginning of man's creation, that he would overpower all but a few of his descendants (17:61). Those who are lured by Satan have clear material interests before them. There are some who engage themselves in the pursuit of magic in the name of genies, while others establish their superiority over the gullible public by linking their poetry or soothsaying to a genie patron, that is, they claim to have been inspired by a genie. In the Hereafter, it will be evident that those who went astray, or those

In the Hereafter

who led people astray, did not do so due to any misunderstanding. Indeed, they knowingly ignored the truth; it was not a case of their remaining unaware of it but of their being unable to rise above worldly temptations. They could not bring themselves to sacrifice their temporary gains. It is patent that the guidance sent to them by God through His chosen servants was so clear that no one could have remained ignorant of the truth. But their love of this world was responsible for drawing a veil over their eyes. They did not follow the path of guidance, despite the fact that they were fully informed of it.

In the Hereafter all those artificial props which made people unmindful of reality will vanish. Then they will see clearly how it happened that truth came before them, but they rejected it outright, resorting to falsehoods as excuses. It will become obvious to them how their error was shown to them as plain as daylight, and how they managed to find beautiful words to refute the truth, thinking that they would succeed in proving that their stand was the right one.

In the Hereafter

God forgives lapses, but He will not forgive insolence.

MAN'S TRIAL

We created you and gave you form. Then We said to the angels: 'Prostrate yourselves before Adam.' They all prostrated themselves except Satan, who did not.

'Why did you not prostrate yourself when I commanded you?' God asked.

'I am nobler than Adam,' he replied. 'You created me of fire but You created him of clay.'

He said: 'Begone from here! This is no place for your contemptuous pride. Away with you! Henceforth you shall be humble.'

Satan replied: 'Rephrase me till the Day of Resurrection.'

'You are reprieved,' said He.

'Because You have led me into sin,' said Satan, 'I will waylay Your servants as they walk on Your straight path, and spring upon them from the front and from the rear, from their right and from their

Man's Trial

left. Then You shall find the greater part of them ungrateful.'

'Begone!' said God. 'A despicable outcast you shall henceforth be. With those that follow you I shall fill the Pit of Hell'.

(The Qur'an 7:11-18)

In this world of trial it repeatedly happens that one person rises above another, attaining to a greater share in wealth and honour; sometimes it happens that giving one's lawful dues amounts to belittling oneself; sometimes God selects an individual to proclaim a truth on behalf of God, whereupon he appears to be superior to those who failed to find the truth. On such occasions Satan arouses jealousy and haughtiness within, the human breast. The feeling of 'I am better than he is' does not allow one man to give recognition to another. In the eyes of God, one who falls a prey to jealousy and arrogance on such occasions follows the path of Satan. One who crushes such negative feelings produced by Satan finds the straight path which will lead him directly to heaven.

ROBE OF PIETY

Children of Adam! We have given you clothing with which to cover your nakedness, and garments pleasing to the eye, but the finest of all of these is the robe of piety.

That is one of God's revelations. Perchance they will take heed. Children of Adam! Let the devil not deceive you, as he deceived your parents out of Paradise. He stripped them of their garments to reveal to them their nakedness. He and his companions see you whence you cannot see them. We have made the devils supporters of unbelievers.

(The Qur'an 7:26-27)

Man needs to be clothed, but not just externally. He needs inner raiment too—that of piety—fear of God, acceptance of truth, setting the same standard for oneself as for others, regarding oneself as God's servant, remaining modest and humble, concentrating on the thoughts of the Hereafter instead of being astray in the world. When a person adopts all these values, it is like a splendid dressing of his inner existence, and when he adopts an

attitude opposite to this, he divests his inner existence of its entire moral apparel.

Satan tempts man. He makes people believe the 'forbidden tree' to be the source of all good. He comes to man from such seemingly innocent paths that man has no inkling that the way is paved with sinfulness. Satan attacks man at his weakest points. Sometimes an idea which has nothing to do with truth is described in beautiful words. Sometimes a partial truth is brought before people as total truth, sometimes trivial things are made out to be of vital importance. Sometimes a useless activity is depicted as the secret of all progress. Sometimes a destructive act is presented as a constructive act.

Satan succeeds with those people who do not ponder over the signs of God; who are not willing to understand what is rational in the language of argument; who prefer their personal prejudices to the demands of truth; who cannot see such truth as makes no concession to their personal gains and considerations.



THE COMING TIMES

A space of time is fixed for every nation; when their hour is come, not for one moment shall they hold it back, nor can they go before it.

Children of Adam when apostles of your own come to proclaim to you My revelations, those that take warning and mend their ways will have nothing to fear or to regret; but those that deny and scorn Our revelations shall be the people of the Fire, and there they shall remain forever.

Who is more wicked than the man who invents a falsehood about God or denies His revelations? Such men shall have their destined share, and when Our messengers (angels) come to carry off their souls, they shall say to them: 'Where now are your idols, those whom you invoked besides God?' 'They have forsaken us,' they will answer, and will admit that they were unbelievers.

(The Qur'an 7:34-37)

The verdict of hell or heaven for man is given on the basis of his reaction to the truth. When truth comes to a person supported by arguments, his mind testifies to God's truth having been laid clearly before him. Now he is left with no plea, no excuse that he had not been shown the right path. But, if even after being told the truth, he refutes it, it is certain that his response is the result of arrogance. A superiority complex has come in the way of according the truth pride of place while he accepts a lower position himself. Nothing awaits such a person in the next world except hell.

When a man refutes the truth, he does so on the basis of some feeling of confidence or the other. Sometimes this confidence is based on wealth and power, sometimes on honour and popularity. The material things provided to him for the purposes of trial come to be considered by him as dependable supports, and he feels sure that he will come to no harm as he stands on firm ground. But this is his greatest misconception. On the day of judgement, when these ephemeral supports have left him, it will become plain that

he had rejected the truth all along due to haughtiness, using the many words at his disposal to justify his refusal of truth on false grounds of principle.

REFORMED BEHAVIOUR

Do not corrupt the earth after it has been purged of evil. Pray to Him with fear and hope. His mercy is within reach of the righteous,

(The Qur'an 7:56)

World reform means the re-establishment of order by God on this earth. Man has to lead his life in accordance with this God-established system. It is not lawful for him to adopt any path other than this.

Human activity was initially designed by God to create no excessive clamour. Here God has arranged for breathing in fresh air, so man must not indulge in activities which may pollute the atmosphere. The vegetables and animals flourish in their separate spheres, so man should remain in his own sphere, instead of encroaching on those of other creatures. Since everything is functioning in a planned way, man should, moreover, refrain from adopting any such emotional, hasty course as will lead to social disruption.

Reformed Behaviour

All the things of this world are functioning in complete coordination with one another, so man must also lead his life in harmony with others, wishing them well and seeking what is profitable for his brethren. The benefits of such a world are manifold.

There are only two possible kinds of behaviour for men on this earth created by God — reformed behaviour and corrupt behaviour. Reformed behaviour is the conscious following of the perfect order already established by God in the universe. As opposed to this, corrupt behaviour is deviation from that order and the adoption of a self-made system. But the latter course ill befits God's creatures, for the earth has already been reformed by God. This has not been left for man to do. Man has only to follow the path of nature and build his society on the same pattern. This reformed earth of God is not only the best place for human habitation, but it is also the best model for human conduct.

GOD'S VOICE

When your Lord brought forth descendants from the loins of Adam's children, and made them testify against themselves, (He said): 'Am I not your Lord?' They replied: 'We bear witness that You are.' (This He did) lest you should say on the Day of Resurrection: 'We had no knowledge of that,' or: 'Our forefathers set up partners with God; but will You destroy us, their descendants, on account of what the followers of falsehood did?'

Thus We make plain Our revelations so that they may return to the right path.

(The Qur'an 7:172-174)

This explains how the Lord and Creator instilled conscience into human nature in such an indelible way that it became the prime indicator of man's humanity. Whenever a moral issue comes before an individual, it is his conscience which gives him a clear indication of what is right and what is wrong. (In our times, the experiences of the USSR in one respect and of Turkey in another are proofs that even a totally adverse, anti-religious atmosphere

has failed to change conscience-based human values.)

Unlike the animals who, in the absence of conscience, are destined to follow their instincts, man has the power to obey or to disregard the inner voice of his conscience. He is completely free to choose his course of action, to indulge in whatever activities he pleases. It is on this point that man is being tested—his correctness of choice. On this hinges the verdict of heaven for one, hell for another. One who pays heed to the voice of God — whether we call it conscience or the silent language of nature — has passed this test. The doors of heaven will be opened to him after death.

The voice of nature is God's directive to everyone. Neither can one have the pretext of being ignorant of the truth, nor can one put forward the plea that whatever one does is in continuance of the practices of one's forefathers. Since consciousness of God is inborn and an inseparable part of human nature, no one — whatever the circumstances — has any excuse for straying from the right path.



THE BLESSINGS OF GOD

It was God who made the heavens and the earth, and sends down water from the sky with which He brings forth fruits for your sustenance. He drives the ships which, by His leave, sail the ocean in your service. He has created rivers for your benefit, and the sun and the moon, which steadfastly pursue their courses. And He has subdued for you the night and the day. He grants you all that you ask of Him. If you reckoned up God's favours, you could not count them. Truly, man is wicked and thankless.

(The Qur'an 14:32-34)

To an astonishing degree, the present world bears witness to the presence of God. His will is immanent in the abundant provision to man of earthly resources and in His gift to man of the capacity to harness those resources to the purposes of his daily living. God has given man power over the earth and water, over the rivers, seas and mountains. He has caused him to profit by the changes of the seasons, the alternation of night and

day. Nature responds to man's every need, providing in advance things of which we had no prior conception.

All these manifestations of God's beneficence are so incredibly wonderful that they should leave in awe of God and cause him to enter into lifelong servitude of his Creator. Yet this does not happen. What is the reason? Why is it that the concept of the Creator of the Universe does not make every hair on a man's body stand on end? The reason is that he has been observing the universe from his earliest childhood. Because it appears perpetual and unchanging, it strikes him as being a normal, familiar sight. He finds nothing unique or extraordinary in the universe, not even the motion of the stars and planets in the vast, outer reaches of space.

Moreover, when man finds or receives anything in this world, it comes to him shrouded in the veil of cause and effect. He therefore regards God's bounty as stemming from his own efforts and capacities. That is why expressions of thankfulness do not come gushing from his lips for the Giver-God. This

The Blessings of God

on the part of man, is the gravest kind of neglect. It is injustice coupled with ingratitude.

GOD'S COMMAND

God enjoins justice, kindness and charity to one's kindred, and forbids indecency, wickedness and oppression. He admonishes you so that you may take heed.

Keep faith with God when you make a covenant with Him. Do not break your oaths after you have sworn them: for (by swearing in His name), you make God your surety. God has knowledge of all your actions.

(The Qur'an 16:90-91)

To God, man's first duty is to see that justice is done. For example, whenever there is an outstanding debt, it should be paid, fully and in time, irrespective of the person concerned — whether weak or strong, friend or foe. In the payment of dues, the sole consideration should be the fulfillment of the obligation.

Man's next duty is to be kind to his fellow men. This means that in the granting of rights and the payment of dues, an attitude of broad-mindedness should be adopted. Humanitarianism (*muruwah*)

should go hand in hand with justice. In human dealings, generosity and compassion, going beyond the call of legality, should be brought into play. Man should have the courage to be willing to receive less than the share due to him and to give others more than their share.

His third duty is to respect the rights of relatives. That is to say that a man should be as sensitive to his relatives' needs as he is to his own. No man of resources should think that his wealth is to be spent only on himself and his immediate family. To his list of responsibilities he should add the paying of dues to relatives.

Three vices prohibited in this verse are indecency, wickedness and oppression. Indecency means flouting the dictates of one's conscience in order to indulge in known moral evils. Wickedness (*munkar*), the very opposite of virtue (*ma'ruf*), consists of those practices disapproved of in every society as failing to measure up to moral standards. Oppression — the tyrannising and coercion of others, is a serious deviation from the path ordained by God.

DAY AND NIGHT

Yet man prays for evil as fervently as he prays for good. Truly, man is ever hasty.

We made the night and the day twin marvels. And We enshrouded the night with darkness and gave light to the day so that you might seek the bounty of your Lord and learn to compute the seasons and the years. We have made all things manifestly plain to you.

(The Qur'an 17:11-12)

The order of day and night tells us that the way of God is for darkness to precede light; both are equally necessary in the divine scheme of things. Just as there are benefits in the light, so are there advantages in the darkness. If there were no difference between day and night, how could man systematically divide his time between work and rest?

Man should not run away from darkness and be a seeker of "light" alone. One with such a desire shall have to leave this world of God and find another

world for himself, for the fulfillment of such a desire has no place in the divine scheme for our world.

Impatience is one of man's greatest weaknesses. He feels that he should never have to face any phase of darkness and should receive light without waiting. This unwillingness to accept the divine scheme of God is a serious weakness. This antipathy to God's plan is the cause of much human destruction.

God wants man patiently to restrain himself from indulging in the ephemeral pleasures of the world in order that he may continue his journey towards the next world. But, in unseemly haste, he seizes upon temporary delights. Then he is unable to continue his journey onwards. It is this foible which is the cause of his being deprived of the blessings of the next world.

In our present world, real success is achieved only through patience, not through haste.



IN THE LIGHT OF EXPERIENCE

It is your Lord who propels your ships across the sea so that you may seek His bounty. He is indeed Merciful towards you.

When at sea a misfortune befalls you, all but He of those to whom you pray forsake you; yet when He brings you safe to dry land, you turn your backs upon Him. Truly, man is ever thankless.

(The Qur'an 17:66-67)

This world is functioning in consonance with particular laws set forth by God Himself. That is what makes it possible for man to travel over the water, in the air and on the earth. This was so ordained that man might recognize the blessings of God and be His thankful servant. Regrettably, whatever man sees happening to him and around him, is considered by him to be all a matter of cause and effect. All the events that stem from the munificence of the Creator are taken as happening on their own. These engender neither feelings of gratefulness to God nor the realisation of His might.



The realisation of God is deeply embedded within man's own nature, but rises to the surface only in times of great calamity, in the face of which he feels himself helpless. For instance, when a tempest overtakes his ships on some vast ocean, all artificial veils are removed from his vision. He recognizes the One God and starts invoking Him alone.

Man is made to undergo this temporary experience in order that he may mould his entire life accordingly, with momentary recognition turned to permanent faith. But how sad a reality it is that he is reminded of God only on such occasions as being engulfed in tempests. It is even sadder that he becomes oblivious of his Saviour as soon as he is delivered from the storm.

Accepting the uniqueness of God's divine nature is *tawheed* (monotheism); refusal to accept it is *shirk* (paganism, polytheism and idolatry). The reality respectively of *tawheed* and *shirk* are recognition and non-recognition of the oneness of the godhead.

MENTAL FRAME

Yet when We bestow favours on man, he turns his back and holds aloof. But when evil befalls him, he grows despondent.

Say: 'Each man behaves after his own fashion. But your Lord best knows who is best guided.'

(The Qur'an 17:83-84)

It is common for a man to receive comforts in abundance and yet evince no signs of contentment or gratitude. If upbraided, he becomes obdurate. No viewpoint other than his own is acceptable to him. But when all his resources and props are taken away from him and he experiences helplessness he suddenly loses all hope and courage and is plunged in despair.

In this world most people have such experiences. But there are very few who discover the truth as a result. They think that in this world where they have freedom, they may continue to show insolence and arrogance in the face of reality. Then what will be their state when Doomsday comes and they are

Mental Frame

divested of all their might? How powerful man thinks himself to be, but how weak he is in reality.

The thinking and the circumstances of the society in which a person moves, are conditioning factors in his particular mental framework (*shakilah*).

He thinks under the influence of his own society and forms his opinions accordingly. But the only right viewpoint is that which is so according to the Knowledge of God. Any viewpoint which takes no account of divine knowledge is bound to be wrong.

It is on the point of right thinking that man is being tested. What man has to do is break out of the mental framework, which has been acquired under the influence of his environment, so that he may see things as they are in effect, with the divine eye. Those who remain enclosed in their mental shell very soon go astray, whereas those who venture to emerge from it in order to seek the divine truth are the ones who are rightly guided.

TRIAL

We made a covenant with Adam, but he forgot and showed himself lacking in steadfastness. And when We said to the angels: 'Prostrate yourselves before Adam,' they all prostrated themselves except Satan, who refused.

'Adam,' We said, 'Satan is an enemy to you and to your wife. Let him not turn you both out of Paradise and plunge you into affliction'.

(The Qur'an 20:115-117)

A strong will is extremely essential to the carrying out of God's commands. If a person readily comes under the influence of irrelevant matters, he will certainly stray from the path of God. In order to adhere to the path of God, knowing God's commandment alone is not sufficient; determination too is necessary to withstand all those negative influences which go against God's will. When God commanded the angels to prostrate themselves before Adam, they did so immediately. But Satan did not prostrate himself. What was the reason behind this difference in

Trial

behaviour? The reason was that the angels took this matter as pertaining to God. On the contrary, Satan took this matter as pertaining to man. When an issue is treated as a matter of God's will, there is only one possible way for His creatures to conduct themselves, and that is to obey God.

But when an issue has to be taken up between man and man, the first reaction will be to gauge whether the opposite party is the stronger or the weaker. If the stronger, he will be given his due, but if the weaker, all too often his wishes will be ignored, even if there is every moral justification for his plea being acceded to, or a pledge to him fulfilled.

The story of Adam and Satan is repeatedly enacted in daily living. Everyone confronts this situation in his life's dealings. When one comes across a person to whom something is owed, whether in the form of some material thing or of an expression of some truth, one stands once again on the same trial ground as prevailed in the case of the first man. On such occasions, when a man surrenders before the truth, it is as if he

Trial

submits to God, and when he does not accept the truth, it is as if he has followed in the footsteps of Satan.

SIGNS OF THE UNIVERSE

Do you not see how God has subdued for you all that is on the earth? He has also given you ships which sail the sea at His bidding. He holds the sky from falling down: (This it shall not do) except by His own will. Compassionate is God, and Merciful to men.

It is He who has given you life, and He who will cause you to die and make you live again. Surely man is ungrateful.

(The Qur'an 22:65-66)

All the objects of the universe continuously maintain a special equilibrium. If this were disrupted, things would become harmful instead of beneficial. If we put a piece of metal into water it will sink instantly. But water has been bound by a special law laid down by God, which makes it possible for wood or iron which has been given the shape of a boat not to sink. Similarly, there are innumerable bodies in space, which should apparently fall down, but are bound by a special

law which keeps them suspended in their orbits with great precision.

Man has not been created by man. He has been created by God. Then he has been placed in a world which is full of blessings. However, on discovering his freedom, man becomes so vain and insolent that he shows no gratitude to his greatest Benefactor. The entire universe is a proof in itself. It is a practical demonstration of all those realities. Man is required to believe theoretically in the same realities of which the universe is a practical demonstration. If man were to study the system of the universe, giving ear to its silent language, he would receive inspiration and enlightenment from it, and he would be able to read all the divine realities in it as if it were an open book. In it he would see the Creator fully mirrored.

Finding God is entirely possible. The only condition is that man should seriously pursue His discovery as the greatest goal in his life.

HUMAN WILL

And We enjoined man (to show kindness) to his parents, for with much pain his mother bears him, and he is not weaned before he is two years of age. We said: 'Give thanks to Me and to your parents. To Me shall all things return. But if they press you to serve besides Me deities you know nothing of, do not obey them. Be kind to them in this world, and follow the path of those who turn to Me. To Me you shall all return, and I will declare to you all that you have done'.

(The Qur'an 31:14-15)

After God, a man's parents are the ones to whom he is most indebted. But where there is a clash between what his parents desire from him and God's will, he must disregard the former in favour of the latter. However, even then it is incumbent on him to continue to serve his parents.

Man's responsibility to his parents is to pay their dues, to respect them, always to speak gently to them, to fulfill their needs and to be of service to them in the fullest sense of the word.

Human Will

Man's obligation to God is to thank Him from the deepest recesses of his heart. He must acknowledge the godhead of God. All his feelings and emotions must be in acknowledgement of God's blessings until at every moment he comes to remember God, his very existence becomes an expression of God Almighty and he is overwhelmed with thoughts of God.

VOLUNTARY SUBMISSION

We offered Our trust to the heavens, to the earth, and to the mountains, but they refused the burden, and were afraid to receive it. Man undertook to bear it, but he has proved a sinner and a fool. God will surely punish the hypocrites and the unbelievers, both men and women, but God pardons believing men and believing women. God is Forgiving and Merciful.

(The Qur'an 33:72-73)

Man and the universe are creations of God. It is required that both of them completely surrender themselves to God. However, there is a difference in the nature of each surrender. Whereas the universe has from the outset been subjected to God's will, man is required when he reaches the age of reason to submit himself to God of his own free will.

'Trust' here relates to free will. Free will is a matter of trust because it is a gift which God has given to man temporarily in order to test whether he will put it to the best use or not. Trust, in other

words, is the tacit understanding that the subservience which God exacted from the stars and the planets will be offered to Him by man of his own volition.

In this universe it is only God who is Lord and Sovereign. All other things are His subjects. It was God's will that a creature should come into being which does what God wants him to do, without any compulsion, of his own free will. This voluntary submission is so subtle a test that even the heavens, the earth, and the mountains cannot bear it. However, man despite great apprehensions of his failing to fulfill the responsibility, accepted it. Now man in this world is the repository of one of God's trusts. He has to impose on himself what God has imposed on other objects in the universe. He has to rigorously apply the commands of God to himself. Man is in a state of trial and the present world serves as a vast trial ground for him.

This 'trust' is an extremely delicate responsibility, for the matter of reward and punishment is based on its fulfillment. Other creatures have no

Voluntary Submission

freedom, therefore, in their case, this question does not arise. Man enjoys freedom. That is why his actions must be subject to divine retribution.

EMBELLISHMENT OF ACTIONS

Men, the promise of God is true. Let the life of this world not deceive you, nor let the Dissembler trick you about God. Satan is your enemy: therefore treat him as an enemy. He tempts his followers so that they may become the heirs of Hell.

The unbelievers shall be sternly punished, but those that accept the true faith and do good works shall be forgiven and richly rewarded.

Is he whose foul deeds seem fair to him, like the man who is rightly guided? God leaves in error whom He wills and guides whom He pleases. Do not let your soul expire in grief for them: God has knowledge of all their actions.

(The Qur'an 35:5-8)

We are told by the apostles of God that the nature of life is beyond the experience of man. On the contrary, the things of the world — death, earthquakes, calamities are like tidings of *Qiyamah* (Doomsday) in advance. But Satan immediately diverts people's attention, making them believe that

these events (earthquakes, etc.) are nothing more than matters of cause and effect, rather than being manifestations of divine intervention. All such thoughts are deceptions created by Satan. That day is sure to come when the false and the true are differentiated; when good people are rewarded for their good deeds and bad people are punished for their bad deeds.

God has bestowed upon everyone the capacity to think and distinguish truth from untruth. One who makes use of his God-given capabilities, receives guidance, while one who does not is left to his own resources.

When the truth becomes apparent to a man, his mind receives a jolt. At that moment two paths are open before him. If he accepts the truth, his mind's course is set in the right direction. On the contrary, if it should happen that, for circumstantial, or psychological reasons, he rejects the truth, he then, more often than not, commits the even greater folly of attempting to justify his failure in order to present a bad deed in a good light.

NATURE'S COVENANT

'Stand aside, O guilty people, this day. Did I not enjoin you, Sons of Adam, not to serve Satan who is your acknowledged enemy, but to worship Me? Surely that was the right path. Yet he has led many of you astray. Had you no sense? This is the hell with which you have been threatened. Burn therein this day as a punishment for your unbelief.'

On that day We shall seal their mouths. Their hands will speak to Us, and their very feet will testify to their misdeeds.

(The Qur'an 36:54-65)

In this present life both good and bad people live together in the same world. In the next life the worlds of both will be separated. The followers of Satan will be with Satan and the followers of God will be with God.

No one worships Satan in the name of Satan. (That is, one does not say that one is worshipping Satan.) But indirectly everyone who worships something or

someone other than God is in actual fact worshipping Satan. If this is so, it is because Satan has presented his falsehoods in an attractive light. For instance, the worship of illustrious ancestors and angels began when Satan put unreal but pleasing thoughts about them in the minds of the people, who falling a prey to Satan's temptations, (i.e. believing that their ancestors and the angels, etc. were divine beings) began worshipping them.

Modern research has shown that human skin is a kind of record of the imprints of all human voices and that these can be replayed. This makes it understandable how people's hands and feet will start narrating all their doings in the world they left behind.

The concept of God is instilled from birth in man's nature or consciousness. Everyone has it in his nature to accept God as his superior and surrender to Him. It is as if all human beings, are bound by God through this covenant. When man, guided by this covenant, walks the path of obedience to God, he becomes a wayfarer on the straight path set by God, and is thus led to the destination of eternal blessings.

KNOWLEDGE AND IGNORANCE

When harm is done to man, he prays to his Lord and turns to Him in repentance; yet no sooner does He bestow on him His favour than he forgets what he had prayed and sets up equals to Him, in order to lead men away from His path.

Say: 'Enjoy your unbelief awhile; but you shall surely be consigned to Hell. Can he who passes his night in adoration, standing up or on his knees, who dreads the terrors of the life to come and hopes to earn the mercy of his Lord, (be compared to the unbeliever)? Are the wise and ignorant equal?' Truly, none will take heed but men of understanding.

(The Qur'an 39:8-9)

Everyone experiences moments of helplessness, when the things treated by him as props fail to help him. In moments of adversity, man then turns away from all material support and begins to invoke the Almighty. It is as if he has come to realise that there is no god but the one God. But no sooner he is clear of adversity than he reverts to his previous state.

Worse still, he attributes his salvation to something other than God. Sometimes he attributes it to a miracle wrought by false gods, at other times to the 'miracle' of cause and effect.

Some people are distressed only by material loss. Others become restless at the remembrance of God. It is people such as the latter who are god fearing. Their belief in God is not the products of circumstances (that is, inherited by birth in a certain family) but is a conscious discovery on their part. They have found God as a Superior Being and all their hopes and fears are associated with that same Being. Their restlessness does not allow them to pass the night sleeping comfortably. Their solicitude is not that of ignorance but results from the remembrance of God.

The one who experiences great emotional stirring in remembering God is the truly knowledgeable person, while the one who is affected in this way only by material matters, who is aroused only by material shocks from his comfortable sleep, is the really ignorant person.

AN ADMONITION

Do you not see how God sends down water from the sky which penetrates the earth and gathers in springs beneath? With it He brings forth plants of various colours. They wither, they turn yellow, and then He turns them to chaff. Surely in this there is an admonition for men of understanding.

He whose heart God has opened to Islam, shall receive light from his Lord. But woe to those whose hearts are hardened against the remembrance of God! Truly, they are in the grossest error.

(The Qur'an 39:21-22)

The breathtakingly astonishing system of rains on earth, then the growth of vegetation from it, then the bringing forth of crops — all these material happenings have innumerable lessons to teach. But only those who are capable of going deeper into the subject will learn anything from them.

God has planned the external world in such a fashion that everything in it serves as a sign of the Higher Reality. Man has, moreover, been endowed

An Admonition

with such capabilities as help him to read those signs and understand them. Now those who keep their natural faculties alive and, by availing of them, ponder over the things of the world, will unlock the doors of realisation within themselves. While those who allow the intellect to become sluggish will be unable to learn lessons from anything. They will see, but this will not be the seeing of realisation; they will hear, but this will not be the hearing of realisation.

In this present world everything that begins is heading towards its pre-destined end. For instance, a seed, once sprouted, starts its life as a tiny plant, then gradually develops into a sapling, then into a fully grown tree. The same is true of the things of this world.

This happening serves as a divine lesson for man. In this way God tells man that he is, also heading from beginning to end: childhood followed by youth and old age. Afterwards death will lead us to a new and eternal existence.

GOOD ACTIONS

We have enjoined man to show kindness to his parents. With much pain his mother bears him, and with much pain she brings him into the world. He is born and weaned in thirty months. When he grows to manhood and attains his fortieth year, let him say: 'Inspire me, Lord, to give thanks for the favours You have bestowed on me and on my parents, and to do good works that will please You. Grant me good descendants. To You I turn and to You I surrender myself.'

Such are those from whom We will accept their noblest works and whose misdeeds We shall overlook. (We shall include them) among the people of Paradise: true is the promise that has been given them.

(The Qur'an 46:15-16)

A new human generation comes into existence with each child born of a man and a woman. This child, cared for and nourished by its parents, grows up to be a fully rounded human being. This is a system devised by nature for the nurturing of human life.

Good Actions

Its purpose is to inculcate in man a proper sense of rights and duties; to produce such feelings within man as will make him grateful to his benefactors and pay homage to them. This feeling tells man, on the one hand, to fulfill his obligations to those who have helped him to grow up and, on the other, to pay the far greater dues to his Creator and Sustainer.

Those who learn such lessons from nature as make them thoroughly aware of what is due to their parents and to God and act accordingly, are the people who will be deserving of God's eternal blessings in the life to come.

Home serves as the first training ground for man and this training, which starts with the parents, later extends to the whole of society. If man fully accepts such training from the outset, he will be morally equipped not only to give human beings their due, but also to render to God what he owes Him in the vaster sense.



THE REASON FOR DIFFERENCES

Men, We have created you from a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes that you might get to know one another. The noblest of you in God's sight is the most righteous of you. God is Wise and All knowing.

(The Qur'an 49:13)

People appear to be quite different from one another, but all of them have descended from one pair of parents Adam and Eve. When God decreed that a creature such as man should come into existence, he created an archetypal couple — a male and a female, in order to initiate human procreation. As the numbers of humans increased, they began spreading over different parts of the globe, until the entire world, over a long period of time, came to be inhabited by men and women.

Geographical conditions vary in different places, in some parts being very hot, in others very cold. Eating habits also vary from place to place, in some parts non-vegetarian food forming the staple diet, in others, vegetarian food, etc.

The Reason for Differences

Such geographic and cultural differences resulted gradually in variations in people's skin colour, features, height, temperament etc. In this way, some were black or brown, others white, and distinctive racial characteristics developed. Yet all these differences are relative, not real. These are only for the sake of identification, and are not meant to form the basis for discriminatory practices or the establishment of superiority. Most of the evil in this world is caused by people having come to regard apparent differences as real ones. That is why they begin to discriminate between people, thus producing unending prejudice and the injustice that goes with it.

As a matter of origin all human beings are equal. If there is any basis for discrimination between them, it can only be in terms of how pious and god fearing they are. Difference between one person and another has to be based on real attributes and not just on appearances.

DIVINE SURVEILLANCE

We created man. We know the promptings of his soul, and are closer to him than (his) jugular vein. When the two Keepers receive (him), the one seated on his right, the other on his left, each word he utters shall be noted down by a vigilant guardian.

And when the agony of death justly overtakes him, they will say: 'This is the fate you have striven to avoid.' And the Trumpet shall be sounded. Such is the threatened day.

(Then a voice will cry): 'Cast into Hell every hardened unbeliever, every opponent of good works, and every doubting transgressor who has set up another god besides God. Hurl him into the terrible doom.'

His companion will say: 'Lord, I did not mislead him. He had already gone far astray.'

God will say: 'Do not dispute in My presence. I gave you warning beforehand. My word cannot be changed, nor am I unjust to My servants'.

(The Qur'an 50:16-29)

The study of the world tells us that there exists a faultless system of "recording". Man's thoughts are being imprinted on his mental canvas forever. Each word man utters persists permanently in the form of airwaves. Human action is so accurately preserved in the external world through heat waves that it can be re-enacted at any moment. All these are known realities. Moreover, these realities make understandable this statement of the Qur'an that human intentions, sayings and doings, all are in the knowledge of the Creator. Everything related to man is being recorded by angels in their invisible registers.

These verses vividly depict the scene of life after death and *Qiyamah* (Doomsday). We are told what will be the fate of those who had become insolent on finding themselves free in this world. This depiction is so clear that it needs no further illustration.



THE GOAL OF LIFE

I only created mankind and the jinn that they might worship Me. I demand no livelihood of them, nor do I ask that they should feed Me.

God alone is the Munificent Giver, the Mighty One, the Invincible. The lot of the wrongdoers will be like that of their predecessors. Let them not challenge Me to hurry it on. Woe then to the unbelievers when the threatened day arrives!

(The Qur'an 51:56-60)

God has power of His own in all matters. However, He has created angels in order to manage His vast empire. But the situation of human beings is different. They have not been created to fulfill any personal or managerial requirement of God. Their sole purpose is the worship of God.

Worship means surrendering before the Almighty in the full sense of the word. According to Ibn Jurayh worship, in essence, is realisation (*ma'rifah*) of God (Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir*). It is desired of man that he should make his own discovery of God. He

should recognise God although He is invisible. The life that takes shape as a result of this realisation is called servitude of God.

When a pot floating in the river fills to the brim, it sinks. Similarly when man's span of action is completed, death comes unannounced. One who reforms himself before his pot is full saves himself. One who remains oblivious till his last day of the necessity to reform; is doomed to eternal destruction.

If the oppressors are given a long rope, it does not mean that they have been left scot-free. It only means that it is not the *sunnah* (way) of God to seize them in haste.

God has not created man for the completion of His Being. Rather man has been given this opportunity to prove himself a true servant of God in this world of trial in order that he may be deserving of the blessings of God for all eternity.

GUIDANCE BY THE PROPHETS

Has he not heard of what is preached in the books of Moses and Abraham, who fulfilled his duty: that no soul shall bear another's burden and that each man shall be judged by his own labours; that his labours shall be scrutinized and that he shall be justly requited for them; that all things shall in the end return to God?

(The Qur'an 35:35-43)

Along with creating man, God started a chain of prophethood for human guidance. In every age and in every nation prophets have come and conveyed the message of God to men. While provision for the sustenance of life remained constantly available in this world, the principles of how to lead this life were sent to man by God again and again as the occasion demanded. Each prophet was truly a representative of God. But, with the passage of time, the books brought by the messengers were altered and marred by the interpolations of their followers. Thus the original divine guidance became veiled by these human additions.

Ultimately God sent the Arab Prophet with the Qur'an. And God Himself undertook the responsibility of preserving the Qur'an in toto so that it might remain a source of authentic guidance for mankind for all time to come.

The essence of the reality revealed by God through the Prophet is that everyone will necessarily be rewarded for his actions in this world. None can escape the consequences of his actions, nor can anyone save another. Those who fail to take heed of the warnings by the Prophet are the most foolish in this world.

So far as man's relation to God is concerned, everyone is responsible for his own actions. None can share in the consequences of another's deeds. Nor will anyone reap a harvest in the next world other than what he has sown here in this world.

JUST BALANCE

It is the Merciful who has taught the Qur'an. He created man and taught him articulate speech.

*The sun and the moon pursue their ordered course.
The plants and the trees bow down in adoration.*

He raised the heaven on high and set the balance of all things, that you might not transgress that balance. Give just weight and full measure.

(The Qur'an 55:1-9)

Both the creation of man and the revelation of divine guidance are expressions of God's justice. By creating man, and in bestowing upon him the unique gift of speech — possessed by no other object in the universe God has given him the opportunity to attain a high position on earth and in the heavens, so that he may find for himself an eternal state of happiness.

After the creation of man, the divine blessings culminated in the sending of the Prophet and the revelation of the divine Book. Man, in being

provided with right guidance, has been given a supreme opportunity to set his feet on the straight path, and to continue upon it without deviating, so that he may reach his final destination in the knowledge that his life has been a testament to the greater Glory of the Almighty.

It is necessary for the Lord's servants to weigh their words and deeds in the divine scales of justice, for the entire world around man is established on this principle of justice by which he is required by his Creator to regulate his life. No man in the process of giving or receiving must ever fall into unjust ways. Each of his actions must conform to the standards of truth and justice. And his deeds must be in consonance with what he professes. While the Qur'an gives this verbal expression, the events of the universe are a practical demonstration of it. In this way, man can never be in doubt as to which principles to adopt in his life.

THE DAY OF DEFEAT AND VICTORY

It was He who created you. Yet some of you are unbelievers, while others have faith. He is cognizant of all your actions.

He created the heavens and the earth to manifest the Truth and He formed you and gave you good shapes. To Him you shall all return.

He knows what the heavens and the earth contain, and knows all that you hide and all that you reveal. He knows what is in your hearts.

Have you not heard of those who disbelieved before you? They tasted the fruit of their unbelief, and a grievous punishment is yet in store for them. That is because, when their apostles brought them clear signs, they said: 'Shall mortals be our guides?' They denied the truth and gave no heed. But God was in no need of them: He is Self-sufficient and Glorious.

The unbelievers think that they will not be raised from the dead. Say: 'By the Lord, you shall assuredly be raised to life! Then you shall be told of



all that you have done. That is easy enough for God.'

Believe then in God and His Apostle and in the light which We have revealed. God has knowledge of all your actions.

The day on which He will assemble you, the day on which you shall all be gathered—that shall be a day of mutual loss and gain. Those who believe in God and do what is right shall be forgiven their sins and admitted to gardens watered by running streams I where they shall dwell forever. That is the supreme triumph.

(The Qur'an 64:2-9)

Those who achieve success in this world are happy, while those who suffer failure become small and insignificant in the eyes of others. But the truth is that although both defeat and victory in this world have their value, the actual place of defeat and victory is the Hereafter. The loser is one who loses in the Hereafter and the victor is one who is victorious there. The standard of both loss and gain there is totally different from what it is in the

The Day of Defeat and Victory

present world. Victory and gain in this world are based on patently material things, while victory and defeat in the Hereafter will be measured on a divine standard. At that time people will be astonished to see that here matters have been completely reversed. What people had considered gain was actually loss, and what people had considered loss by worldly standards was, in actual fact, gain by the standards of the Hereafter.

CREATION PLAN

*Blessed be He in Whose hands is all sovereignty:
He has power over all things.*

*He created life and death that He might put you to
the test and find out which of you acquitted
himself best. He is the Mighty, the Forgiving One.*

*He created seven heavens, one above another. Do
you see any fault in the work of the Merciful?
Turn up your eyes: can you detect any rift?*

*Then look once more and yet again: your eyes will
in the end grow dim and weary.*

*We have adorned the lowest heaven with lamps,
missiles for pelting devils. We have prepared a
scourge of flames for these, and the scourge of Hell
for unbelievers: an evil fate!*

(The Qur'an 67:1-6)

When one studies the present world, one finds an apparent contradiction, that is, that the entire universe besides man is quite perfect and organised. At no point is there any defect to be seen.

By contrast, human life is marred by oppression and injustice. This is due to the nature of man being different from that of the rest of the universe. Man in this world is in a state of trial. Trial requires, of necessity, freedom of action. It is this freedom which enables him to perpetrate oppression and tyranny in this world.

Tyranny in the human world is the price of human freedom. Yet, without freedom, how can those precious human souls who opt not to be unjust and oppressive – despite the opportunities that present themselves – be differentiated from the willing perpetrators of injustice and oppression? Without freedom, how can those who choose not to indulge in insolent behaviour although quite free to do so, be held above those who do not hesitate to stoop to insolence?

Besides man, nothing in the universe is going to be sent to heaven or hell. If man's fate is different, it is because, having been given the exceptional capacity to distinguish between right and wrong, between truth and untruth, he is a responsible creature. This moral endowment is, in essence, the key to man's

Creation Plan

lot in the Hereafter. In the final judgement, those who have put their freedom to the right and proper use will be rewarded. Those who have not will be punished.

INTERNAL WITNESS

I swear by the Day of Resurrection, and by the self-self-reproaching soul!

Does man think We shall never put his bones together again? Indeed, We can remould his very fingers!

Yet man would ever deny what is to come. 'When will this be,' he asks, 'this Day of Resurrection?'

But when the sight of mortals is confounded and the moon eclipsed; when the sun and moon are brought together -- on that day man will ask: 'Whither shall I flee?'

No, there shall be no place of refuge. For on that day all shall return to your Lord.

On that day man shall be informed of all that he has done from first to last. He shall be a witness against himself, even though he were to offer excuses.

(The Qur'an 75:1-14)

Internal Witness

Every person is gifted by birth with a special faculty called al-nafs al-lawwamah, or conscience, which functions freely within him. Uninfluenced by either impulse and reasoning, it tells man what is wrong, and what is right, what should be done and what should not be done.

This conscience functions as if it were God's court. It warns man in advance of his errors. It tells him repeatedly what attitude or behaviour is proper and what is not. Yet in spite of this, man becomes oblivious of God. He leads his life as if, on Doomsday, he were not going to be taken to task for his words and deeds.

One who adopts such an attitude denies his own nature. His own inner self gives a warning within him, but he is not ready to listen to it. The truth is that the human conscience proclaims in advance what the divine decree will be on Doomsday. If man were to lend an ear to the voice of conscience, he would learn, prior to death, what is going to confront him in the life after death.

TWO PATHS

Surely there came over man a period of time when his life was a blank? We have created man from sperm mixed (with ovum) so that We may put him to the proof. We have endowed him with sight and hearing. We have shown him the right path, whether he be grateful or ungrateful.

For the unbelievers We have prepared chains and fetters and a blazing Fire. But the righteous shall drink of a cup tempered with Camphor-a fountain from which the servants of God will refresh themselves: they who keep their vows and dread the far-spread terrors of the Day (of Judgement); who, though they hold it dear, give sustenance to the poor man, the orphan', and the captive, (saying): 'We feed you for God's sake only; we seek of you neither recompense nor thanks: for we fear from Him a day of anguish and of woe.'

God will deliver them from the evil of that day and make their faces shine with joy. He will

Two Paths

reward them for their steadfastness with robes of silk and the delights of Paradise.

(The Qur'an 76:1-11)

After being created with freedom in this world, man has been shown both the paths – the path of gratefulness and the path of ingratitude. Now which of the two paths he adopts is up to him. For one who opts for the path of ungratefulness there awaits the chastisement of hell. And for one who opts for the path of gratefulness there awaits the blessings of paradise.

One who realises God, realises all other realities as well. The knowledge of God opens the door to all other knowledge. If moreover the individual becomes a man who knows himself, he comes to know reality, i.e. everything as it is in the full sense. This realisation enables him to pay the dues of God as well as of man.

So far as reality is concerned, there is no difference between nature and the shari'ah.

THE SYSTEM ESTABLISHED BY GOD

Are you harder to create than the heaven which He has built? He raised it high and fashioned it, giving darkness to its night and brightness to its day.

And the earth He extended after that; and then drew from it water and brought forth its pastures. And the mountains He set down a provision for you and your cattle.

But when the supreme disaster strikes – the day when man will call to mind his labours and when Hell is brought in sight (of all) – those who transgressed and chose this present life will find themselves in Hell; but those who feared to stand before their Lord and curbed their souls' desires shall dwell in Paradise.

They question you about the Hour of Doom: 'When shall it be?' But how are you to know? Your Lord alone knows when it will come. You are but a warner for those who fear it.



*On the day when they behold that hour, it will be
as if they had tarried in the grave only a single
evening or the morning following it.*

(The Qur'an 79:27-46)

What exists before us in the form of the universe is so great that all other things become totally insignificant in comparison. When a great happening such as the creation of the universe can take place, why cannot matters of smaller import likewise come into existence? In this context, the tidings given by the Qur'an that man has to be reborn is something which has already been made understandable by known events on a very large scale.

Man's life stretches over two phases – one is the present, the other, the Hereafter which for the present is unseen. The actual test of man is for him to prefer the Hereafter as compared to the present world. But this can be achieved only by those who have the courage to control their selfish impulses and desires.

Man has been placed in the present world in order to be put to the test. This test necessarily requires freedom. That is why man has not been placed under any compulsion as has been done with the rest of the universe. He has the option either to conform to the system of God, or to indulge in deviations from it. But this freedom applies only to actions during his lifespan in this world; it does not apply to the result of his actions. Man's final lot will be determined in accordance with the unchangeable laws of God.



THE BOUNTY OF FOOD

Let man reflect on the food he eats: how We pour down the rain in torrents and cleave the earth asunder; how We bring forth the corn, the grapes, and the fresh vegetation; the olive and the palm, the thickets, the fruit-trees and the green pasture, for you and for your cattle to delight in.

But when the dread blast is sounded, on that day each man will forsake his brother, his mother and his father, his wife and his children: for each one of them will on that day have enough sorrow of his own.

On that day there shall be beaming faces, smiling and joyful. And on that day there shall be faces covered with dust and veiled with darkness. These shall (be the faces of) the wicked and the unbelieving.

(The Qur'an 80:24-42)

Man is a creature who needs a continuous supply of food for survival. The arrangement for food which prevails on this earth on a large scale, has been done

The Bounty of Food

without any effort on our part. One part of this sustenance is directly derived from crop yields, such as cereals, fruits and nuts, and from the abundant provision of water everywhere. This produce of the earth is consumed by animals, who convert it into meat and milk, thus indirectly providing us with another source of sustenance.

This divine blessing demands that man live on earth as a worshipper of God. The true way to worship God is, in actual fact, to express gratitude for all this bounty. If man were to think of his creation and give thought to all the beneficent arrangements of nature around him, the feeling of gratefulness to his Lord would necessarily arise within him.

The leading of a life directed by divine guidance, a life of being grateful to God, of worshipping none other than God as a result of this sincere feeling of gratefulness is what is called a God-oriented life in the true sense. Honour and success in the Hereafter await those who lead such lives.

O MANKIND!

O man! What evil has enticed you away from your gracious Lord who created you, gave you an upright form, and proportioned you well? In whatever shape He willed He could have surely moulded you.

Yet, you deny the Last Judgement. There are guardians watching over you, noble recorders who know of all that you do.

The righteous shall surely dwell in bliss. But the wicked shall surely burn in Hell; they shall enter it on the Day of Judgement. They shall not escape it.

Would that you knew what the Day of Judgement is! Oh, would that you knew what the Day of Judgement is! It is the day when every soul will stand alone and God will then reign supreme.

(The Qur'an 82:5-19)

Man is the most meaningful creature in the entire known universe. He has been given a body which is eminently suitable. He has been given a mind, than

O Mankind!

which no other gift can ever be thought better. With all these gifts man has been installed in a world which so perfectly accords with human requirements as to seem incredible.

However, bounties always entail responsibilities, a natural principle which applies to man. The extraordinary gifts given to man are in themselves an announcement of the fact that these gifts come along with responsibilities.

These responsibilities for man are to consider the blessings of God as the trust of God. And he should put God's bounties to use only in accordance with His will.

The creation of man is for an extremely meaningful purpose: one day he is to stand in the court of justice in order that it may be judged who put these bounties of God to the proper use and who failed to do so. On this Day of Justice, which is to come after death, God will judge all men according to their records. Those who pass this test will be ushered into Paradise, and those who do not will be thrown into Hell-fire.

O Man!

O MAN!

When the sky is rent asunder, obeying its Lord in true submission; when the earth is expanded and casts out all that is within it and becomes empty, obeying its Lord in true submission; then, O man, strive hard towards your Lord until you meet Him.

He that is given his book in his right hand shall have a lenient reckoning and go back rejoicing to his people. But he that is given his book from behind his back shall call down destruction on himself and burn in the fire of Hell; for he lived without a care among his people and thought he would never return to God. Yes; but his Lord was ever watching over him.

I swear by the glow of sunset; by the night and all that it brings together; by the moon, in its full perfection: that you shall march onwards from state to state.

Why then do they not have faith, or kneel in prayer when the Qur'an is read to them?

O Man!

The unbelievers indeed deny it; but God knows best the falsehoods they believe in.

Therefore proclaim to all a woeful doom, save those who embrace the true faith and do good works; for theirs is an unfailing recompense.

(The Qur'an 84:1-25)

What has been said here regarding Doomsday appears to concern an unknown world. However, so many proofs exist which indicate the veracity of these statements. One example is provided by this present world.

The presence of this world is in itself a proof that another world like this, or better than this, can come into existence. Secondly, many extraordinary aspects of the Qur'an prove that it is a book of God. With such clear evidence, those who do not believe in the Hereafter and lead a life of neglect of the Hereafter are indeed committing an unpardonable offence.

PERIOD OF RESPITE

By the heaven, and by the nightly visitant!

*Would that you knew what the nightly visitant is!
It is the star of piercing brightness.*

For every soul there is a guardian watching over it. Let man reflect from what he is created. He is created from an ejaculated fluid that issues from between the loins and the ribs

Surely He has power to bring him back to life, on the day when men's consciences are searched. Helpless shall he be, with no supporter.

By the heaven with its recurring cycles, and by the earth, ever bursting with new growth; this is a conclusive utterance, no flippant jest.

They scheme and scheme, and I, too, scheme and scheme. Therefore bear with the unbelievers, and let them be alone for a while.

(The Qur'an 86:1-17)

Period of Respite

The shining of the stars above serves, in symbolic language, as a reminder of the fact that an Observer is watching mankind. This Observer is recording human actions. He will create man again after death and then will judge all his actions. This period of respite on earth is only a test. The fixed time that man is allotted between his birth and his death, serves as a line of demarcation between this world and the Hereafter. As soon as the trial period is completed, the consequences of our actions will appear, right before our eyes, although man had thought this event to be in the far distant future.

Though the Creator of the Universe is in the unseen, His being is clearly manifest in everything. If man were to ponder seriously upon the universe, he would certainly find God. He would discover the reality that in the present universe the only behaviour proper to man is that of obedience to God. Those who indulge in insolent behaviour towards God have no place in His world. Creation is an introduction of the Creator. For its observer, it is a manifestation of the Creator.

THE TEST PAPER

As for man, when his Lord tests him by exalting him and bestowing favours on him, he says: 'My Lord is bountiful to me.' But when He tests him by restricting his subsistence, he says: 'My Lord humiliates me.'

No! But you show no kindness to the orphan, nor do you urge one another to feed the poor. Greedily you lay your hands on the inheritance of the weak, and you love riches with all your hearts.

No! But when the earth is crushed to fine dust, and your Lord comes down with the angels, in their ranks, and Hell is brought near -- on that day man will remember his deeds. But what will memory avail him?

He will say: 'Would that I had done good works in my lifetime!' But on that day none will punish as He will punish, nor will any bind with chains like His.

O serene soul! Return to your Lord joyful, and pleasing in His sight. Join My servants and enter My Paradise.

(The Qur'an 89:15-30)

Man is confronted in this world with two kinds of states, sometimes of gaining, sometimes of losing. Both these conditions are in the nature of tests. They are designed to judge man on the response he makes to these situations. If on gaining, a man becomes vain and proud, and on losing, he suffers from negative feelings, then he has failed in the test.

A very different kind of person is one who, on gaining, bows before God in thankfulness, and, on losing, bows again to express his humility. It is the second of these two who has been called a 'serene soul.'

Whatever man receives in this world in the form of wealth, or in any other form, are all tests of one kind or another. These have no value in themselves; they are a means to another end. That is, man should make use of these things in such a Way that,

in the times to come in the eternal world, they may become the means of his salvation.

TWO HEIGHTS

I swear by this city, (and you are a resident of it), by the begetter, and all whom he begot: We created man to try him with afflictions.

Does he think that none has power over him? He will (boastfully) say: 'I have squandered vast wealth.' Does he think that none observes him?

Have We not given him two eyes, a tongue, and two lips, and shown him the two highways (of good and evil)? Yet he would not scale the Height.

Would that you knew what the Height is! It is the freeing of a bondsman; and feeding, in the day of famine, of an orphaned relation or a needy man in distress; to be one of those who believe, and enjoin patience and mercy.

Those who do this shall stand on the right hand; but those who deny Our revelations shall stand on the left, with Hell-fire close above them.

(The Qur'an 90:1-20)

Two Heights

In no circumstance is man able to free himself from hardships. This shows that man is under some superior power. Similarly, human eyes tell us that there is a superior eye which is watching us. Man's power of speech is indicative of the fact that there is a Being with superior power of speech, Who has given him the faculty of speech and has shown him the right path. If man were to recognise himself in the real sense he would certainly recognise God.

God has commanded man to scale two kinds of heights. One is just behaviour towards human beings and bowing to their needs. Another is firm belief in God. When this conviction is embedded deeply within man, it does not remain confined to his own self but is transmitted to others. The true believer makes the utmost effort to bring others to the same divine path which he himself has come to tread.

Man finds it most difficult to lead a life which is guided by divine principle. But this apparent difficulty is in actual fact a facility, as it is going to lead man towards eternal salvation.



THE NOBLEST OF GOD'S CREATION

By the Fig, and by the Olive!

By Mount Sinai, and this inviolate city.

We created man with the most noble image and in the end We shall reduce him to the lowest of the low; except the believers who do good works, for theirs shall be a boundless recompense.

What, then, after this can make you deny the Last Judgement?

Is God not the best of judges?

(The Qur'an 95:1-8)

The Sinai Mount is one where God spoke to Moses. Makkah is referred to as "inviolate city" where the Prophet Muhammad, (may peace be upon him) was sent with the final version of divine guidance. Tin and Zaytoon, two hillocks near Bayt al-Maqdis, is the place where Christ came and proclaimed divine guidance before the people.



These places are the historical reminders of the fact that God is watching over man. He sends through authentic missionaries the guidance of his choice. In this way God is telling everyone in advance what kind of life should be lead in this world, so that man may save himself from coming to a bad end, and may secure his share in the eternal blessings of God.

God has created man with the best of faculties. These faculties have been given to man, so that he may recognise the truth sent to him by God through His messengers, and then lead his life accordingly. Those who do so will be entitled to an eternal place of honour and prestige.

On the contrary, those who do not conform to the will of God will be bereft of the blessings of this world too, while so far as the next world is concerned, they will suffer nothing short of total deprivation. The advent of the prophets and the consequences which became manifest as a result of refusal or acceptance of their guidance prove the veracity of this statement.

In human life, only the loftiest of goals should be aimed at. That is, man, to make proper use of his

God-given faculties, should aim at the realisation of God and lead a life approved of by God. People who conduct themselves in this way deserve a great reward in the Hereafter. Those who do not come up to this standard will be nothing short of total failures in the life beyond the grave.



THE BOOK OF GUIDANCE

Read in the name of your Lord who created-created man from clots of congealed blood.

Read! Your Lord is the Most Bountiful One, who by the pen, taught man what he did not know.

Indeed, man transgresses in thinking himself self-sufficient. For to your Lord all things return.

(The Qur'an 96:1-8)

These verses of the Qur'an were the first to be revealed to the Prophet Muhammad. They tell us what God's purpose was in choosing this particular way of sending His revelations through His messengers, namely, to inform man of what would otherwise have been impossible for him to learn on his own.

For example, man leads his life in the present world for a fixed period of time, then passes away. During his life-span he appears to be free. This gives rise to two kinds of misunderstandings. One is that man's life is nothing but what it appears to be from birth



to death, and the other is that man is not going to be taken to task for his actions. It was to put an end to this ignorance that God arranged for a series of prophets to bring His revelations to mankind.

In every age and in every nation messengers of God have continued to come, the Prophet Muhammad being the last of the prophets in this chain. Now he is the only source of divine guidance, since no other prophet is going to come till Doomsday.

The message passed on by these prophets was that in this present world man is not free to follow his desires. In all moral issues he is bound to obey the divine commandments given to man by God through His messengers.

However, the presence of the Prophet in person is not necessary for man's guidance. What is necessary is access to the book of God which was brought by him to mankind. With God's Book, the Qur'an available in its preserved state in every corner of the globe and also the sunnah (traditions) of the Prophet enshrined in authentic collections, man has now no excuse for wrongdoing. For it must be remembered that God has not left man alone

after sending His guidance. He is actually keeping a continuous watch over him and after death, he will be brought to the divine court where, according to worldly record, his guilt or innocence will be pronounced by God, and reward or punishment meted out accordingly. Man should, therefore, in building his life, seek continual guidance from the Qur'an and sunnah, so that he may become truly deserving of God's eternal blessings.

AN EARTHQUAKE

*When the earth is rocked in her last convulsion;
when the earth shakes off its burdens and man asks
'What may this mean?' -on that day it will
proclaim its tidings, for your Lord will have
inspired it.*

*On that day mankind will come in scattered
groups to be shown their labours. Whoever does an
atom's weight of good shall see it, and whoever
does an atom's weight of evil shall see it also.*

(The Qur'an 99:1-8)

The earthquake on Doomsday will be a proclamation of the termination of the period of trial. This will mean that the freedom which people had been allotted for the purpose of their being tested has been taken away from them. Then the time will have come for people to receive their just deserts. Today the world of God appears to be silent. But when circumstances change, everything will be given the power of speech. Present day inventions and discoveries have proved that even lifeless objects have the power of "speech." Studio

An Earthquake

performances can be fully replayed by recording sets. Similarly, the present world is as if a huge divine studio. Whatever man does or says is being preserved at every moment. And when the time comes, the story of everyone will be repeated by this world in such a way that neither great nor small sayings and doing will escape God's attention.

For the observance of proper behaviour in this world, man requires only one thing. It should be firmly embedded in his mind that he is under divine surveillance at every moment. The deeds of his entire life will be presented in the court of God. Be these great or small, done secretly or publicly, everything will be there on record.

If man is fully convinced of this reality, he will be shaken completely even before the shaking of the world. Before the all-encompassing earthquake of Doomsday he will experience an earthquake in his own soul which will change him completely. As a result, he will become his own keeper. He will adopt a disciplined life instead of a life of license.

An Earthquake

He will use his powers as guided by the command of God instead of acting independently.

AFTER DEATH

By the snorting war steeds, which strike fire with their hoofs, as they gallop to the raid at dawn, and with a trail of dust, split apart a massed army; man is ungrateful to his Lord! To this he himself shall bear witness.

And truly on account of his love of wealth he is niggardly. Is he not aware that when the dead are thrown out from their graves and men's hidden thoughts are laid open, their Lord will on that day have full knowledge of them all?

(The Qur'an 100:1-11)

The horse is an extremely faithful animal. It sacrifices itself to the uttermost for its master, even at the cost of its life.

It expresses symbolically what man should be like, i.e. that he should have faith in his Lord, just as the horse trusts its master. But in practice this does not happen.

[After Death](#)

In this world an animal is grateful to its master, but man is not grateful to his Lord. Here an animal recognises its dues to its master, but man does not do so in regard to his Lord. Here an animal is engaged devotedly in serving its master. But this is not the case with man.

Man values only that animal which is faithful to him. Then how can he fail to understand that only those will have value and importance in the eyes of God (in the Hereafter) who have proved themselves His faithful servants? It is a sad fact that love of money turns people blind, so that they fail to understand a reality already experienced in their immediate surroundings.

This state of affairs is not going to last. Death must come, reminding man that he is totally in the grip of God. Death, in actual fact, is an entrance to the next world of reckoning. There man has to appear before a divine court, where no human act is hidden from the divine eye.

WEIGHTY ACTIONS

The Disaster! What is the Disaster?

Would that you knew what the Disaster is!

*On that day men shall become like scattered moths
and the mountains like tufts of carded wool.*

*Then he whose scales are heavy shall dwell in bliss;
but he whose scales are light, the Abyss shall be his
home.*

If only you knew what this is like!

It is a scorching fire.

(The Qur'an 101:1-11)

The Doomsday earthquake will rend everything asunder. All the footholds which human beings clung to will be demolished. Nothing will escape its impact. Afterwards a new world will be brought into existence where the truth will be given its full weight. Everything else will pale in comparison. In this world people's likes and dislikes prevail. Things are valued according to people's

Weighty Actions

preferences. But the world of the Hereafter is God's world. There those things will be given importance which are important in the eyes of God alone; all else will become valueless.

Actions in this world derive their value from appearances. In the Hereafter the value of all actions will be determined in respect of their reality. The more sincere people's actions are, the more these will be judged important. Actions devoid of sincerity will lose all importance in the world of the Hereafter, however much these may have appeared important to the people in this world, who judge values by appearances.

In the present world such actions are adjudged important as make concessions to worldly considerations, remain in conformity with current trends and assume importance in the context of the social tradition of the time. Those who can bow to all these considerations acquire great position and honour in this world.

The state of affairs in the Hereafter will be totally different. There, it is the principled life which will be given weightage. There, those actions which

Weighty Actions

have been in accordance with the highest of standards will have value set upon them. There, all importance will be given to those actions which have lasting merit, and not to those actions which were performed keeping temporary considerations in view.

In this world falsehood too may appear to carry weight, but in the Hereafter nothing will carry weight except the Truth.

MATERIAL PURSUIT

You are distracted by worldly gain from the cradle to the grave.

But no, you shall know. You shall before long come to know.

Indeed, if you knew the truth with certainty, you would see the fire of Hell: you would see it with your very eyes.

On that day, you shall be questioned about the pleasures you indulged in.

(The Qur'an 102:1-8)

Our world possesses a vast array of material things, which are attractive and give comforts of innumerable kinds. These are provided in this world to test man and are not intended for his pleasure. If man were to look at these things from the point of view of his being tested, he would avail of them only as a matter of necessity, and then too would use them with the utmost care and responsibility.

Material Pursuit

But man is not usually able to be consistently responsible. The lure of material things and his own never-ending greed cause him to pursue worldly ends unceasingly and with the utmost concentration. In this way he passes his days until the time comes for him to depart from this world. At that time he leaves all his life's earnings behind him. In the next world he finds himself all of a sudden in a state of total deprivation, having nothing with him to stand by him in the next stage of his life. Man craves for more and more money, for gathering around him more and more material comforts. He thinks incessantly of this world until his call to leave for the next world comes. Only then does the realisation dawn on him that all his savings will be of no avail in that world where he has to live for all eternity. That is, he has saved nothing for the world to come.

The accumulation of material things only adds to man's accountability. But man in his sheer ignorance continues to think, blissfully indeed, that his success is being crowned with more and more laurels.



THE TIME IS A WITNESS

I swear by the declining day that perdition shall be the lot of man, except for those who have faith and do good works; who exhort each other to truth and fortitude.

(The Qur'an 103:1-3)

Man, born to live a specific number of years, increases in age until he reaches the final stage of his life, the final limit. Then he dies. The inevitability of this event tells us that only that person is successful who is able in a proper manner to avail of the limited period allotted to him in this world; of one who does not, the time will irrevocably pass, and nothing will fall to his lot but frustration and repentance.

Every moment man is heading towards his death. What does this mean? It means that if he fails to avail of the time allotted to him, his ultimate fate will be a state of deprivation. To turn his life into a success story, man has to act himself, while for failure no action is required. Failure is heading towards him on its own.

A saintly person once observed that he had learnt the meaning of this chapter from an ice vendor, who was calling out aloud in the market: 'O people, have mercy on one whose goods are melting continuously! O people, have mercy on one whose goods are melting continuously!' On hearing this call, it came to his mind that the way the ice was reducing in size at every moment, the lifespan given to man was similarly reducing in length. Thus, if the opportunity to act is not availed of properly by engaging oneself in good actions or inaction, this is man's real loss. (*Imam Razi, Tafsir Kabir*)

Time is put to the proper use by one who gives proof of three things in the present world. One is Faith, that is, consciousness of reality and its recognition; the second is just actions, that is, doing what should be done and refraining from what should not be done; the third is enjoining upon others truth, justice and patience.

It is only the deep perception of reality which will turn a man into a missionary and a preacher of truth. Patience is a necessity to succeed in this world. Only when a man has the will to renounce

The Time is a Witness

all those things which go against faith, does he receive the blessings of faith. Only when he applies a break to his desires, is it possible for him to adopt the path of virtue. Only when a man himself remains patient in unpleasant situations, is he able to exhort others to Truth and Justice.